



Warwick Group CONSULTANTS




Water Resources Policy, Public Finance & Advocacy

Coastal Barrier Resources Act Avalon, NJ

In 2001, Warwick Group Consultants was hired by the Borough of Avalon, New Jersey, to work with Congress to secure funds for the Avalon-Stone Harbor beach nourishment project, *Townsend's Inlet to Cape May Inlet, New Jersey*. The project protects the boroughs of Stone Harbor and Avalon, located on a seven-mile barrier island, from erosion and other damaging impacts from hurricanes and coastal storms. The project was studied by the Army Corps of Engineers in 1996 and authorized for construction by Congress in 1999. When we assisted the Borough to get the funds to move forward with construction, two conditions were set by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS):

- (1) Construction of a sand bypass system, which was implemented through notching the terminal groin at the southern end of Stone Harbor
- (2) Protection of the wildlife habitat south of the terminal groin via deed restriction

Both conditions were met, and the project was initially constructed in 2001 using sediment from Hereford Inlet. The project successfully served its purpose in providing a protective beach berm and expanding the wildlife habitat by nearly 1.5 miles. 



Stone Harbor Point [Left, Completely eroded (1994), Right, Fully restored (2016)]
Image: Google Earth

In 2016, the USFWS reversed its 2001 position and rejected the use of the Hereford Inlet borrow site located in NJ-09 (below) for beach nourishment; this reversal, based on a 1994 solicitor's interpretation of a subsection the Coastal Barrier Resources Act (CBRA) on beach nourishment, required the state, local and federal government to dredge sand from an inlet over 7 miles away at an increased cost of more than \$6.5 million.



Coastal Barrier Resources Act System Unit NJ-09

Warwick Group brought this issue to Congressman Jeff Van Drew, the boroughs' newly-elected Representative, during his first week in office to explain the effectiveness of the project in meeting both of its intended purposes, and the erroneous and arbitrary decisions made by the USFWS that were impacting communities and the taxpayer. When the project was appropriated funding for the next nourishment in FY19, the work could not be done because no adequate sediment source existed for the project outside of NJ-09, leaving the Borough of Stone Harbor without a beach nourishment project and vulnerable to future coastal storms and flooding.

Warwick Group worked tirelessly with Congressman Van Drew's office to identify a solution to the problem. After exhausting a variety of legislative options, the Congressman met with Interior Department Secretary Bernhardt who decided to overturn the solicitor's opinion that held firmly for over 20 years. The result allows sediment to be dredged from a CBRA System Unit and placed outside of the CBRA System Unit as long as it is intended to stabilize, mimic or enhance natural processes within the System Unit.

This change affects not only our client, but former clients and other coastal communities that have sought after CBRA-trapped sediment for years. Today, that red tape has been cleared, and the Boroughs of Avalon, Stone Harbor, and many communities will be better protected from coastal storms and flooding by this modification.

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